

Ideas to help others who have witnessed a distressing event

- ▶ Reassure them that they are safe and the event is over
- ▶ Be a good listener
- ▶ Just being there is helping
- ▶ Accept that the person may not be themselves for a while
- ▶ Encourage them to resume normal routines
- ▶ Ask them what you can do to assist them and be guided by their answer
- ▶ Avoid saying “forget about it”, “pretend it didn’t happen” or “put it out of your mind”
- ▶ Allow them to make their own decisions
- ▶ Be aware that everyone is different and what may seem a small event to one person can be a major event for others
- ▶ Encourage them to see their local doctor or seek assistance from a professional

In an emergency call Triple Zero (000)

Ambulance Membership

1800 64 84 84

Ambulance Victoria

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Support Organisations

Lifeline

(Australia wide)
Ph: 13 11 14
24 Hr Crisis Support Information & Referral Service
www.lifeline.org.au

Kids Help Line

Ph: 1800 551 800
www.kidshelp.com.au

beyondblue

Ph: 1300 224 636
Information on depression and anxiety, and where to get help.
www.beyondblue.org.au
www.youthbeyondblue.com

Mensline

Ph: 1300 789 978
www.mensline.org.au

Sane Helpline

Ph: 1800 18 SANE (7263)
Advice & referral on mental illness.
www.sane.org

Nurse-on-call

Ph: 1300 60 60 24
Expert health advice from a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Family Drug Help @ Sharc

Ph: 1300 660 068
www.familydrughelp.com.au
www.siblingsupport.com.au
www.sharc.org.au

Road Trauma Support Services

Ph: 1300 367 797
www.rtssv.org.au

Red Nose

Ph: 1300 998 698
or 1300 308 307
www.rednose.com.au

Griefline

Ph: 9935 7400
12 noon to 3am daily
www.griefline.org.au

The Compassionate Friends Victoria

Ph: 1800 641 091
Supporting bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents.
support@compassionatefriendsvictoria.org.au

The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

Ph: 1800 642 066
www.grief.org.au

Victims Support Agency

8-11pm (7 days)
Ph: 1800 819 817
Victims of Crime Helpline & Victim Support Services.

Sexual Assault Crisis Line

Ph: 1800 806 292
www.sacl.com.au
www.casa.org.au

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

Ph: 1800 015 188
www.safesteps.org.au

Ambulance Victoria



A guide to dealing with Trauma or Medical Emergencies for Witnesses

ambulance.vic.gov.au

Ambulance Victoria is dedicated to caring for the community

In most cases, our paramedics need to quickly transport a patient to hospital and may not be able to provide support to those bystanders, family and friends who witness, or are involved in, a traumatic event.

Your welfare is important to us too

This brochure provides advice on dealing with the possible after-effects of witnessing, or being involved in a medical emergency.

It is important that you make the time to take care of yourself and to know where you can seek further assistance should you feel it necessary. This brochure is provided for the purpose of providing guidance to those involved in traumatic events but does not replace professional assistance.

If you are experiencing difficulties please seek professional assistance through one of the organisations listed in the brochure or your own existing professional support network.

Coping with a traumatic event

Medical emergencies are often unexpected and can be traumatic or distressing to the people present. Some people experience an immediate emotional or physical reaction, sometimes this reaction is delayed, and some people appear not to have a reaction.

It is important to remember that people react in *different ways*.

Some reactions or changes that you may notice

- ▶ Anxiety or fear
- ▶ Irritability or anger
- ▶ Depression and/or grief
- ▶ Trouble sleeping
- ▶ Disturbing dreams
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating
- ▶ Reliving the event and flashbacks of aspects of the event
- ▶ Withdrawal
- ▶ Mood swings
- ▶ Gastro-intestinal problems
- ▶ Over-reaction to noise
- ▶ Self-doubt and lack of confidence
- ▶ Pre-existing personal problems may be more difficult to deal with.

These are normal reactions to witnessing an abnormal event.

Ideas to help yourself after a distressing event

- ▶ Give yourself time to recover
- ▶ Accept that your reactions are normal given the abnormal event you have experienced
- ▶ Talk about the event with people you trust
- ▶ Be prepared to ask for professional help if necessary and/or if reactions persist or interfere with your daily activities and enjoyment of life
- ▶ Your local doctor is a good person to talk to especially if you are suffering any physical reactions following the event
- ▶ Consider what you need to help you recover e.g. having company and staying with someone rather than being home alone
- ▶ Postpone making any major life changing decisions until you are feeling better
- ▶ Try to get back to your normal routine as soon as possible
- ▶ Avoid excessive alcohol, nicotine and coffee
- ▶ Eat healthy food
- ▶ Get some exercise
- ▶ Do things you enjoy
- ▶ Spend time with people you feel comfortable with
- ▶ Regularly monitor how you are going and what you might need to assist you to deal with what you experienced.

